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108th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 24 July 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Dante Maria Caputo, President of the General Assembly at its forty-third session

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session

The Acting President: It is my sad duty to inform the members of the General Assembly of the passing, on 20 June, of His Excellency Mr. Dante Maria Caputo, President of the General Assembly at its forty-third session, and on 14 July of His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I should like to convey our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Argentina and Namibia, respectively, and to the bereaved families of Mr. Caputo and Mr. Gurirab.

I shall now deliver a statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly.

This morning we pay tribute to two stalwarts, His Excellency Mr. Dante Caputo of Argentina, President of the General Assembly at its forty-third session, and His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. Both men served their countries as Ministers for Foreign Affairs before being elected to serve the General Assembly. They dedicated their public lives to diplomacy, and we are all very grateful.

Mr. Caputo became Foreign Minister of Argentina in 1983. During his tenure, he laid strong foundations for many multilateral initiatives that went on to benefit the region and the world. The Southern Common Market, the Rio Group and the Cartagena Group are prime examples. As a political scientist at heart, Minister Caputo's intellectual expertise would later benefit not only his native Argentina but also the wider global community. A true champion of peace, as President of the General Assembly Minister Caputo emphasized the importance of countries seeking a peaceful settlement of disputes and the role of the United Nations and its organs in promoting peace.

During Minister Caputo's tenure, the Assembly had on its agenda the item on the question of Namibia, on which Minister Gurirab also worked. For years as observer of the South West Africa People's Organization to the United Nations, Mr. Gurirab used his oratory and political mastery to advance the interests of the people of Namibia. He did so again as Foreign Minister in 1990, when Namibia gained independence.

A man of principle, integrity and great acumen, Minister Gurirab was elected to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, in 1999. He brought the highest standards to the office. During his tenure, the Assembly also had a very busy schedule, with three special sessions — on small island developing

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States, women, and social development — also being convened. He led with distinction.

They have gone before us and they have made their mark. They contributed greatly to our global endeavour to maintain peace, uphold human rights and promote justice and social progress. While we mourn their passing, we can preserve their legacy through our own actions and commitment to the cause of multilateralism and the United Nations. On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to convey profound sympathies to their families and to the Governments and the peoples of Argentina and Namibia during this time of grief.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of Mr. Dante Maria Caputo and Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, former Presidents of the General Assembly.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The Acting President: In accordance with rule 70 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now give the floor to Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, to make a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Ms. Viotti: On behalf of the Secretary-General, I join the General Assembly in sorrow at the recent loss of two distinguished members of the United Nations family, each a greatly admired public servant and each a former President of the General Assembly.

Dante Caputo, who passed away last month, will be remembered for his wide-ranging contributions to peace and democracy in his native Argentina and across Latin America and the Caribbean. His ties with the United Nations were productive and close. As Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Haiti in the early 1990s, he facilitated the democratic transition in that country following decades of repressive rule.

As President of this organ at its forty-third session, he helped to guide the Assembly at a time of profound global change. Through his service as Argentina's Foreign Minister and with the Organization of American States, his voice was crucial in Latin America's own democratic transformation. Those contributions across a life of influential action and ideas form an important legacy.

Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, who died earlier this month, will be remembered as one of Namibia's founding fathers. His involvement with the United Nations dates back to the 1960s, when he received a United Nations fellowship to attend Temple University in the United States. It continued during his years as the observer of the South West Africa People's Organization at the United Nations.

After Namibia's independence, Mr. Gurirab returned to New York as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session and helped put causes such as the Millennium Development Goals on the global agenda. He also played an invaluable role in the adoption of the landmark Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. The United Nations was proud to stand with Namibia in its struggle for independence, and is grateful to have benefited from the work of Mr. Gurirab, who also served with great skill as his country's Minister for Foreign Affairs and as Prime Minister.

The careers of Dante Caputo and Theo-Ben Gurirab spanned roughly the same chapter in history. Both were committed to diplomacy, international cooperation and a rules-based global order, and both showed how the United Nations can bring about peaceful, positive change. We can honour their service by preserving and building on the achievements to which they dedicated their lives.

I express our profound gratitude for their contributions and offer condolences to their families, friends and all others touched by our great loss.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Amayo (Kenya): I have the honour, on behalf of the Group of African States, to pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. Dante Caputo of Argentina, President of the General Assembly at its forty-third session, who passed away on 20 June. The late Mr. Caputo, who was a champion of democracy and human rights, respected dialogue and listened to everyone, regardless of their rank. The late Mr. Caputo was one of the significant promoters of the Rio Group, which called for joint and multilateral action by Latin American countries in order to preserve peace and democracy in South America. He also became one of the leaders of the Cartagena Group, whose objective was to encourage joint action

by indebted countries towards creditors in order to ease their debt burden.

Today we celebrate his life of commitment and democracy, which was demonstrated by his bravery during a period in Argentina when it was not easy to take such a stand. As the Argentine Minister for Foreign Affairs, he helped shepherd the 1984 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Chile and Argentina. The African Group pays tribute to this great son of Argentina for standing for, and defending the ideals of, peace and democracy. We stand together with our Argentine brothers and sisters to celebrate a life well lived by a man who reminds all of us what it means to be brave and visionary. We shall continue to honour his memory by recommitting to the ideals that he cultivated, including equity among nations for the purposes of development and the alleviation of poverty.

Allow me now to pay tribute, on behalf of the African Group, to the late President of the General Assembly Mr. Gurirab.

I have the honour, on behalf of the African Group, to pay tribute to a fallen son of Africa who dedicated his life to fighting injustice, racism and violent oppression. The late Mr. Gurirab was a peacemaker and freedom fighter who became one of Africa's best diplomats owing to his negotiation and conflict-resolution skills, which led him to serve for 14 years as the chief observer of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) to the United Nations, and later as its Permanent Observer. From 1986 to 1990, he served as SWAPO's Secretary for Foreign Affairs and played a major part in the negotiations leading to Namibia's independence. The late Mr. Gurirab brought the struggle of the Namibian people to the attention of the international community and played a key role in the protracted negotiations that produced Security Council resolution 435 (1978), which contained an internationally accepted plan to bring independence to Namibia.

As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, the late Mr. Gurirab led three years of negotiations over Walvis Bay, which resulted in its reintegration and that of the off-shore islands into Namibia in 1994, in fulfilment of Security Council resolution 432 (1978). The late Mr. Gurirab cared deeply about his country, Namibia, and the continent of Africa. He returned home in 1989 to help organize pre-independence elections, and was one of the leading SWAPO negotiators of the ceasefire agreement signed in 1989 between South Africa's apartheid regime and SWAPO. That set the stage for elections in Namibia and its transition to independence. The late Mr. Gurirab also served as a member of the Constituent Assembly, which drafted the Namibian Constitution, and is credited as one of the leading figures who helped set Namibia's foreign policy trajectory.

The late Mr. Gurirab worked tirelessly to promote regional and subregional cooperation and, in 1995, represented Namibia on the bureau of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Council of Ministers. That year, as the Council's first Vice-Chair, he presided over the first extraordinary session of the central organ of the OAU for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

The late Mr. Gurirab was elected in 1999 to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. The leadership he provided during his tenure led to the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Africa honours the late Mr. Gurirab for his great contribution to the realization of self-determination for Namibia, which was Africa's struggle. He dedicated his life to promoting peace and fighting for the human rights of the Namibian people. The history of Africa is one of struggle for independence and our heroes of the African liberation movement cannot be counted without mentioning Mr. Gurirab. We pay tribute to him as a hero who will be remembered in African history as a freedom fighter, a peacemaker and a consummate diplomat.

In conclusion, to honour his life and legacy, we commit to the implementation of the development agenda to complete the unfinished business of the MDGs, succeeded now by the Sustainable Development Goals, and to teach future generations and generals to live up to the ideals of peace, respect for human rights and the protection of the freedom that was earned through the sacrifice of heroes such as the late Mr. Gurirab.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Singapore, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Ms. Tang (Singapore): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States to remember and pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. Dante Maria Caputo, President of the General Assembly at its forty-third session.

During his lifetime, Mr. Dante Caputo served his country and the international community in many ways. He was Argentina's Minister for Foreign Affairs from 1983 to 1989. During that time, he signed the 1984 Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Chile, which ended the Beagle Channel conflict. He was a leader of the Contadora support group, a predecessor of the Rio Group. He was also one of the leaders of the Cartagena Group and played a key role in laying the foundation for the Southern Common Market.

The year that Mr. Caputo served the General Assembly as President during its forty-third session was a remarkable one for multilateralism and the United Nations. During that year, there were agreements reached to end the war in Afghanistan and to establish a ceasefire between Iran and Iraq. In December of that year, an agreement was also reached to usher in Namibia's transition to independence. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its contributions to peacekeeping. The prestige of the United Nations had never been greater.

Even so, as he passed the baton following his term, we were all aware that the successive peace and multilateralism remained fragile. Mr. Caputo understood that. He understood that, to survive and prosper, multilateralism needs its champions. Multilateralism and the persistence of the international order requires continued effort from us all. In that respect, Mr. Caputo continued to serve the international community throughout his lifetime, taking up roles as Special Envoy for the United Nations and in the United Nations Development Programme.

In remembering his life today, the Asia-Pacific Group pays tribute to Mr. Caputo's work for his country, his region and the international community. He was a true son of Argentina, who did his country proud and upheld the cause of multilateralism and the international rules-based system. As we approach the closure of the seventy-second session, let us continue his legacy and work in the spirit of cooperation and consensus, in the common understanding that we are all stronger together than we are apart.

I now have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States and to extend our deepest condolences to the family of Theo-Ben Gurirab, as well as to the Government and the people of Namibia, on the passing of a giant in Namibia's history.

Mr. Gurirab was one of the founding fathers of Namibia and devoted his life to the liberation of his nation and the anti-apartheid struggle. He spent 27 years in political exile, and his tireless efforts as the chief representative and subsequently Permanent Observer of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) to the United Nations, followed by his role as SWAPO Secretary for Foreign Affairs, placed the struggle of the Namibian people for self-determination in the international spotlight. His efforts were central in laying the groundwork for an independent Namibia. Mr. Gurirab also played vital roles, as the key drafter of Namibia's Constitution, in helping to organize pre-independence elections and in negotiating the ceasefire agreement between South Africa's apartheid regime and SWAPO in 1989.

Following Namibia's hard-won independence, in March 1990, Mr. Gurirab served as the new nation's first Minister for Foreign Affairs and was a prime architect of Namibia's diplomacy. It was during that period that he concurrently served as the President of General Assembly for its fifty-fourth session. During his tenure as President of the General Assembly, he oversaw the successful Millennium Summit of world leaders, during which the historic Millennium Declaration was adopted. It was through that milestone Declaration that the community of nations committed to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and set out the Millennium Development Goals, the precursor to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Gurirab also played an important role in the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. Mr. Gurirab went on to serve his country honourably as Prime Minister, and subsequently as Speaker of the National Assembly, until his retirement from public office. Mr. Gurirab's enduring commitment to justice, solidarity and self-determination, as well as multilateralism and the rule of law will continue to inspire us all. We honour the indelible legacy he left for Namibia, the African continent and the international community.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Czech Republic, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mrs. Chatardova (Czech Republic): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

It is with sadness that we received the news of the passing of His Excellency Mr. Dante Maria Caputo, President of the General Assembly at its forty-third session, and His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. On behalf of the members of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to express our deepest condolences to the families and friends, as well as the the Governments and the peoples of Argentina and Namibia.

Mr. Caputo dedicated many years of his professional career to being a diplomat and politician in the service of the people of Argentina, the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS). In the words of His Excellency Mr. Jorge Faurie, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina,

> "Mr. Caputo was the first Foreign Minister when democracy was restored, and that gives him an important role in Argentina's history. He was a man who was committed to human rights, who respected dialogue and dissent and who listened to everyone, regardless of their rank or hierarchy."

After serving as the Foreign Minister from 1983 to 1989, Mr. Caputo was elected to the Chamber of Deputies and served as Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Committee. In 1992, Mr. Caputo represented the OAS and the United Nations in Haiti as Special Envoy. In 1993, he was appointed the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to Haiti and negotiated an agreement to allow for the democratic transition on the island. From 2001 to 2004, he directed the regional project on democratic development in Latin America of the United Nations Development Programme. He also held various positions at the OAS, including Secretary for Political Affairs.

Mr. Gurirab, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, was regarded as one of the founding fathers of the independent Republic of Namibia, one of the principal architects of Namibia's diplomacy and a stalwart of the anti-apartheid and freedom struggle. He was the country's first Minister for Foreign Affairs, from 1990 to 2002, and subsequently served as the second Prime Minister of Namibia from 2002 to 2005. He was one of the key drafters of the Namibian Constitution and contributed immensely to the drafting of new laws for independent Namibia.

From 1990 to 2015, he was a member of the National Assembly of Namibia, while from 2005 to 2015 he served as the Speaker of the Assembly. During that term, namely, from 2008 to 2011, Mr. Gurirab also held the position of President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Among Mr. Gurirab's achievements at the United Nations was the chairing of the negotiations that brought about the reintegration of Walvis Bay into Namibian territory, in fulfilment of Security Council resolution 432 (1978).

Our thoughts and sympathies are with the family and friends of Mr. Caputo and Mr. Gurirab. May they rest in peace.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Antigua and Barbuda, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Webson (Antigua and Barbuda): I have the sad duty to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States in tribute to His Excellency the late Mr. Dante Maria Caputo, President of the General Assembly at its forty-third session, who passed on 20 June. Mr. Caputo represented the developing world and our regional Group of Latin American and the Caribbean States with great pride.

Mr. Caputo was the former Foreign Minister of his native Argentina and was also known as a dedicated professor, a sharp and meticulous diplomat and a passionate political leader. He is widely remembered in Argentina for rebuilding the prestige of Argentine diplomacy and achieving the reintegration of the country into the world after several years of international tension.

He is also known for his work on the South American integration movement, the birth of the Southern Common Market and the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Chile. As President of the General Assembly, Mr. Caputo took immense care in trying to address the widening gap of inequality and wealth between the developed and developing countries.

After his tenure as President of the General Assembly, he never ceased in his service to the international community. He represented the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) in peace missions in Haiti, which led to the restoration of democracy in the country. In recent years, Mr. Caputo worked in several international organizations. From 2001 to 2004 he was a project director for the United Nations Development Programme, and between 2006

and 2009 he was the Secretary of Political Affairs of the OAS.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States expresses its solidarity and sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Caputo and to the Government and the people of Argentina during these difficult times of national grief. The Group also wishes to remind us all, as international civil servants, to not only use this occasion to pay homage to that outstanding diplomat from the developing world, who dedicated his life to service not only to Argentina but also to the world, but also to use this occasion to recommit ourselves to fulfilling the indelible work in ensuring the provision of a safer, more secure and unified world.

I now turn to our tribute to His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab. I have the sad duty, once again, to deliver this statement on behalf of the members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States in tribute to the late Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, who passed away on 14 July.

Mr. Gurirab represented the developing world with distinction and was the son of the African region. His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab is being recalled as a prominent politician in his home country of Namibia and is considered one of the architects of the country's independence in the fight for freedom from colonialism for the independence of his people. Mr. Gurirab's persistence and insistence that freedom and justice belong to every human being provided him with the moral armour to serve his country in several positions, namely, Minister for Foreign Affairs from 1990 to 2002, Prime Minister from 2002 to 2005 and Speaker of the National Assembly from 2005 to 2015.

Mr. Gurirab was elected President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session in 1999. During his presidency of the General Assembly, he was instrumental in the work of conceiving the Millennium Development Goals, the forerunner to today's Sustainable Development Goals. Under his stewardship, Heads of States and Governments for the first time formally recognized the importance of interaction and engagement among the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which he also headed.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States expresses its condolences and sincere solidarity to the family of Mr. Gurirab and to the Government and people of Namibia. We express our heartfelt sympathy for the last of the freedom fighters. The Group also wishes to remind us all that in honouring the life of that great leader, we can do so by recommitting ourselves to fostering a better environment for international peace, diplomacy and development.

May their souls both rest in peace and may our world continue in the fight that they have left us.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Braun (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): In a sad coincidence, I address the General Assembly today to pay homage to two former Presidents of the General Assembly.

It is with profound sadness that we have learned of the passing of Mr. Dante Maria Caputo, former President of the General Assembly. He will be remembered for his outstanding diplomatic career and his commitment to peace, democracy, human rights and regional cooperation.

Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Argentine Republic from 1983 to 1989, Dante Caputo contributed significantly to the preservation of peace and the strengthening of democracy in Latin America, and in particular in his own country after the end of the dictatorship. He was one of the founding fathers of the Southern Common Market and a major supporter of the Contadora Support Group.

Mr. Caputo guided with confidence and finesse the work of the General Assembly as President during its forty-third session, at a key moment at the end of the Cold War, marked by major geopolitical changes. He pursued his work in the service of our Organization, first as the Special Envoy and later as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti. In his functions as director of the regional programme for democratic development in Latin America of the United Nations Development Programme, he could rely on his experince in his national capacity for the sometimes difficult reconciliation among Latin American States.

I extend my condolences, in the name of the Group of Western European and other States, to the people and the Government of Argentina, and foremost to his family and friends, whom we know are many.

Today I would also like to pay tribute to another former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab. He will be remembered as a politician and diplomat whose exceptional commitment to the independence of his country and respect for human rights is undeniable.

As a member of the South West African People's Organization, Mr. Gurirab held the position of its observer to the United Nations for 14 years. During that period, he contributed significantly to the historic struggle for independence of his country. He played a major role in the process leading to the adoption of Security Council resolution 435 (1978), which opened the door to the independence of his country. As a member of the Constitutional Assembly, was able to crown his previous efforts on becoming the key penholder during the drafting of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia. After independence, he served in the most prestigious of functions of his country.

Mr. Gurirab presided over the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly at a pivotal moment in history during the preparations for the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 and the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals. His work therefore largely contributed to adapting our Organization to the strategic challenges of the twenty-first century. He was also a leader in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which now serves as our guide. As President, and later as Honorary President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Mr. Gurirab contributed to the shaping of democratic awareness in multilateral institutions. I need not recall how important that is in our world today.

I offer my condolences, in the name of the Western European and other States Group, to the people and the Government of the Republic of Namibia, and especially to his family and his friends, whom we know are inconsolable. Our thoughts are with them during this time of sorrow. Our thoughts are with all of the friends and families of Mr. Dante Caputo and Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Amadeo (United States of America): On behalf of the United States, I wish to express my sincere condolences to the people of the Argentine Republic regarding the passing of Mr. Dante Maria Caputo, former Argentine Foreign Minister and President of the General Assembly at its forty-third session.

Dante Caputo was a driven and passionate diplomat, an educator and a lifetime public servant. He was devoted to serving the Argentine people and tirelessly campaigned for the restoration of democracy to Argentina, until it was achieved. His bravery earned him the well-deserved role as Argentina's first Foreign Minister after the return of democracy. His efforts were vital in establishing democratic institutions in his country and bringing his people to peace by dismantling the seven-year military dictatorship. He promoted freedom and democracy at a time when it was not easy. He showed us that ideas, and even action, are not enough, but rather that those ideals need to be framed in institutions and Government.

He was a man who was committed to human rights, and who promoted dialogue and discussion in the face of disagreement. He pushed for accountability for those found guilty of human rights violations in the Argentine military. He was vital in the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Chile, successfully ending conflict between the two countries over the Beagle Channel. The questions we face today — on how to uphold human rights in an evolving security space or to promote justice — do not have easy answers. Mr. Caputo showed us that we can instil change, as impossible as it may seem.

Mr. Caputo was a great partner for the United States. He helped improve the partnership between our two countries. We have since formed a counter-narcotics partnership and gained an important security ally. Relations between the United States and Argentina are stronger now than ever before.

The world stage welcomed Mr. Caputo here in New York as the President of the General Assembly at its forty-third session. He was a leader on international development, a strong advocate against racial discrimination and an activist for greater cooperation between developed and developing nations. Today we not only mourn his loss, but also recognize him for his dedication and leadership in the fight to promote democracy and human rights around the world.

The passing of Dante Caputo is a devastating loss for the entire international community. May God bless the memory of Dante Caputo and the people of Argentina.

On behalf of the United States, I wish to express my sincere condolences to the Government and the people of the Republic of Namibia on the death of Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab. Mr. Gurirab was a seasoned diplomat, a negotiator and a leader. He envisioned an independent Namibia, united across ethnic groups, with a democracy that would give Namibians academic and economic opportunities.

The United States and our United Nations community have known Mr. Gurirab since he was young. His dedication earned him a United Nations Fellowship to study in the United States at Temple University in Pennsylvania. He graduated with a degree in political science and quickly took up the torch of his nation's liberation movement, the South West African People's Organization, working as its associate representative at the United Nations in New York for eight years.

Then, for 14 years, Mr. Gurirab was devoted to the independence movement's delegation at the United Nations. Through his hard work and devotion, Security Council resolution 435 (1978) was adopted, calling for a ceasefire between the independence movement and South Africa. That resolution also established the United Nations Transition Assistance Group, which oversaw elections, South Africa's eventual withdrawal and, ultimately, Namibian independence. As a member of Namibia's Constituent Assembly, Mr. Gurirab helped draft Namibia's Constitution, which is the basis of democratic Namibia. Mr. Gurirab taught us the power of dedication and action. His efforts shed light on the important role of the United Nations, and of the Security Council, in advancing peace and security around the world.

In addition to being Namibia's first Foreign Minister, Mr. Gurirab also served as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. From a student-in-exile who received a United Nations study fellowship, to serving as a chief negotiator for a United Nations-mediated conflict, Mr. Gurirab showed us that persistence and faith could unite the international community. His leadership in the General Assembly is a testament to his dedication to diplomacy and international relations.

Mr. Gurirab was an optimist and idealist, but for him ideas were never enough. He worked for three decades to achieve the independence of his homeland, and as Namibia became independent he helped create an enduring democratic structure for future generations. He quickly raised the profile of his young nation on the global stage and forged strong relationships, including with the United States.

Mr. Gurirab will be remembered as a founding father of Namibia and a global leader. His contributions to the creation of an independent and democratic Namibia will be enjoyed by Namibians for generations to come. May God bless the memory of Mr. Gurirab and the people of Namibia.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to express my profound appreciation for the heartfelt words of those who preceded me, including the Vice-President of the General Assembly, the Chef de Cabinet to the Secretary-General, all of the Chairs of the regional groups and, of course, the United States of America as the host country.

It is an honour for me to deliver this statement in memory of Dante Maria Caputo, Argentine Minister for Foreign Affairs from the democratic recovery in 1983 until 1989 and President of the General Assembly at its forty-third session, among the other high positions he held in the international arena throughout his outstanding and impeccable career.

To remember Dante Caputo in this Hall is to remember him with great emotion and pride. He embodied before the world the recovery of democracy and the commitment to the struggle for human rights in Argentina, and during his tenure, he outlined some of the foreign policy guidelines that continue to set the course for my country's actions in the world today. His commitment to human rights, freedom and the defence of institutions was exemplary and inspired generations of Argentine diplomats and politicians.

As he said in his address to the general debate of the Assembly during its forty-first session,

> "We the Argentine people believe in the possibility and need for peace ... based upon truth, justice and freedom for all, without exception. ... Our presentation is essentially political. ... We believe in peace as a true formula for coexistence, in equality as a predicate of action towards the common welfare, in development as a focus for the energies of men and women to build a new society. We have no other weapons than our minds.

> ... We prefer a world in which people can coexist peacefully and freely, not in submission or under oppression." (*A/41/PV.5, pp. 99-104*)

Dante Caputo was also a strong advocate and promoter of dialogue and understanding among people, as well as integration. He has been described as an architect of consensus and compromise, with an unstoppable desire to unite what others separated and to bring together those who thought differently. His work and leadership were instrumental in concluding the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Chile and Argentina, and his efforts towards integration among Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil laid the foundation for the creation of the Southern Common Market.

As a faithful exponent of the region, Dante Caputo embodied Latin America and the Caribbean's commitment to peace and democracy, and in that regard actively participated in the Contadora Support Group, later called the Rio Group, to promote peace in Central America. Moreover, he was one of the promoters of the Cartagena Group, with the objective of the indebted countries taking action against the foreign debt creditors.

As President of the General Assembly, Mr. Caputo was responsible for presiding over this forum at a time when the world was beginning to undergo a transition into a period of profound changes in the international order and power relations among States. He served during the tenure of His Excellency Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar as Secretary-General, and both embodied the values and professionalism of Latin America at the helm of the Organization.

During Caputo's tenure as President, the Assembly made progress on issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security, the defence and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms and economic development with equality. After completing his term as President of the General Assembly and Foreign Minister of the Argentine Republic, Dante Caputo continued to work actively in the international arena for peace, democracy and human rights as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Haiti from 1992 to 1994, and subsequently as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti and Head of the United Nations Mission in Haiti from 1993 to 1994. He was also appointed Special Envoy of the Organization of American States for Haiti in 1993. In that context, he helped conclude the Governors Island Agreement, which made the democratic transition and the beginning of national reconciliation possible in Haiti.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Government and the people of Argentina, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to the family of Dante Caputo, who has undoubtedly left an indelible mark on the memory and future of our country, region and the entire world. We will be eternally grateful for having had such an excellent exponent of the values that unite us as an international community.

Lastly, let me also say a few words in memory of Theo-Ben Gurirab, who was President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, while representing his country Namibia. He stood out for laying the groundwork for the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals and for fostering interaction between the United Nations and parliaments around the world. We extend sincere condolences to the Government and the people of Namibia, as well as to the entire African continent, on the loss of one of the founding fathers of that nation and a true leader.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Namibia.

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): I join all those who have spoken before me in expressing the heartfelt sympathy of the Government and the people of Namibia on the passing of Minister Caputo of Argentina. He worked hand in glove with the late Theo-Ben Gurirab in the corridors of the United Nations, sharing the same aspirations and objectives in the fight for liberty, justice and freedom. He became Foreign Minister at a time when Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab was Foreign Minister. He shared his understanding and knowledge with Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and oversaw the implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978) for Namibia. We extend our deepest condolences to the bereaved family of the late Minister Caputo and to the entire bereaved nation of Argentina.

Today we are gathered here to pay tribute to one of the legends, and indeed a hero of Namibia's liberation struggle, and one of Africa's and, dare I say, one of the world's finest diplomats. He grew up in the rural village of Usakos, in my country, Namibia, and rose to become a distinguished global citizen and statesman — a champion of freedom, democracy, peace, human rights, the right to self-determination and independence.

On behalf of the bereaved Gurirab family, the Government and the people of Namibia, I wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to you, Sir, and to all our colleagues for your invaluable support in honouring an outstanding son of the Namibian soil. He was truly an extraordinary representative of the values and principles upon which our international parliament of the people, the United Nations, was founded. It was here among diplomats from around the world that he stood up and raised his voice against racial oppression and injustice and apartheid colonialism and demanded liberty, justice and freedom for people all over the world fighting to liberate their countries from the shackles of colonialism. It was here where his journey as fearless defender of human rights and independence for the people of his beloved Namibia found its way into the corridors of the United Nations and onto the international stage. It was here where his close friend and comrade Mr. Hage Geingob, now President of the Republic of Namibia, handed the reigns to him to take charge as the top diplomat of the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) at the United Nations in 1972. It was here, nearly 50 years ago, that his remarkable journey into the world of diplomacy begun.

I thank the members of the Assembly from the bottom of my heart for taking the time to be with us today as we pay tribute to the late Honourable Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab. In his departure, Namibia has lost a son, Africa has lost a visionary and the world has lost a great leader. As we bid farewell to one of the legends of Namibia's liberation struggle, we honour the legacy of an outstanding representative of the people, who distinguished himself as a skilful, talented, sharp and eloquent negotiator. He was known as a Pan-Africanist at heart, who always reminded us of the vision of the founders of the Organization of African Unity, now the African Union.

Here at the United Nations and in other international forums, he was known for his toughness in negotiations, but because of his ever-present gentleness he was simply and affectionately referred to as Ben. It is funny how I am able to say that only now that he cannot hear me, for it would never have left my lips to address him in such an informal manner. He was my Minister, Prime Minister and Speaker — never would I have dared to call him Ben, as he was referred to here in the halls of the United Nations.

Over the past week since his demise, we have heard numerous accolades and heart-warming tributes about this remarkable son of the Namibian soil. The central message was, is and will remain that Theo-Ben Gurirab has left an indelible mark as a highly intelligent, fiery but compassionate diplomat. He was a man of unbelievable charm, generally soft-spoken with captivating oratory skills.

Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab was in no small measure an intellectual giant. He was a man with a deep passion for the art and purpose of the diplomatic profession; intoxicated with a desire to seek peaceful settlement of conflicts. He was a skilful negotiator who was committed to the pursuit of justice for the disenfranchised, with a strong conviction that win-win solutions would have long-lasting impact. Without exception, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab has been hailed as a consummate diplomat, one of the principal architects of Namibia's diplomatic prowess, anti-apartheid and tireless freedom fighter, towering figure of Namibia's diplomacy, a stalwart of the struggle for Namibia's independence, as well as a great proponent of African pride and identity.

Mr. Gurirab arrived in the United States in 1963, upon being awarded a United Nations Fellowship. He attended Temple University in Pennsylvania, where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science. He completed advanced post-graduate studies in international relations in 1971. In 1964 he was appointed, along with His Excellency Mr. Hage G. Geingob and the late Hidipo Hamutenya, as one of SWAPO's troika of associate representatives to the United Nations and the Americas, serving in that capacity while simultaneously pursuing their education.

As a seasoned diplomat and negotiator, Mr. Gurirab served as SWAPO's chief observer at the United Nations for 14 years, during which time he successfully led the campaign that resulted in the General Assembly adopting resolution 3111 (XXVIII) on 12 December 1973, granting SWAPO observer status as the authentic representative of the Namibian people and recognizing the South West Africa People's Organization in 1976 as the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people. Under his able stewardship here at the United Nations, Mr. Gurirab succeeded in making the case for Namibia's independence when a plan for the independence of the territory was unanimously adopted by way of Security Council resolution 385 (1976), of 30 January 1976, demanding free and fair elections in Namibia, under the supervision and control of the United Nations.

Over the 14 years of his stewardship as SWAPO's top diplomat at the United Nations from 1972 to 1986, the Organization's political and diplomatic status grew from that of a petitioner on the sidelines of diplomacy to a mainstream negotiator and participant in the international arena. Through his efforts Mr. Gurirab turned the struggle of the Namibian people into a celebrated cause of the international community. The protracted negotiations that produced Security Council resolution 435 (1978), which contained an internationally accepted plan to bring independence to Namibia, represented one of the high points in his political career.

Following Namibia's independence, Mr. Gurirab held the positions of Foreign Minister from 1990 to 2002, Prime Minister from 2002 to 2005 and Speaker of the National Assembly until his retirement in March 2015. He also served as President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union from 2008 to 2011.

Mr. Gurirab will be remembered for his role as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, from 1999 to 2000, when he presided over the Millennium Summit of the United Nations. He had the distinct and singular honour of presiding over the General Assembly as it transitioned from the twentieth century into the twenty-first century from 1999 to 2000. Without question, I would say that that was a once-in-a-lifetime privilege.

Over more than 35 years in the field of international affairs and diplomacy, Mr. Gurirab knew and worked with three generations of world leaders and five Secretaries-General of the United Nations. He devoted his life to the liberation of his country. Throughout his extraordinary journey through life, he remained a man of the people, a firm believer in the power of education and knowledge and an advocate for equal rights and for the advancement of women and young people in society. He was an avid reader, a historian, a philosopher, a compassionate and dedicated family man, a friend of the arts and culture, a diplomat par excellence and, above all, a distinguished gentleman.

On a personal note, I had the privilege to know and to work with that extraordinary man for the entire 28 years of my career in the foreign service of our country. I remember him as one of the most eloquent and passionate diplomats. He was painfully precise, especially in his use of vocabulary and in his writings. At the same time, he was able to sit and talk with anyone and to fit in with anyone at their level. He was at ease with world leaders, academics and superstars and with his staff — in fact, with anyone. There is no doubt that he was an icon for many of us in the diplomatic world, particularly those of us who had the privilege to work closely with him.

In conclusion, allow me to share with members a few lines of my personal message to him. The plan has set, and the time to bid you farewell has dawned on us. For you, honourable TBG — as I affectionately used to call him — the journey into eternity has just begun. We salute you and will forever be grateful for your legendary example of service and of hard work and for your sacrifices and immeasurable support and selflessness. Farewell my dear teacher, mentor, icon of Namibia's extraordinary diplomatic finesse, internationalist, distinguished orator and gentle giant. Until we meet again, may your soul rest in perfect peace.

The Acting President: That concludes the tributes paid to two former Presidents of the General Assembly, namely, the late Mr. Caputo and Mr. Gurirab.

Agenda item 14 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Draft resolution (A/72/L.63)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.63.

Mr. Cadena Duarte (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.63 entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025)".

In its nine preambular and six operative paragraphs, this succinct but significant draft resolution seeks to increase the political relevance of the implementation of activities in the context of the work programme of the Decade. Among its sources of information, it is worth mentioning the report of the Secretary-General (A/72/829) and the 2017 report *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*, compiled by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNICEF, the

World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Government of Ecuador notes with deep concern that the 2017 report indicates that the number of people suffering from chronic undernourishment throughout the world increased to 815 million in 2016, as compared to 777 million in 2015. Also, while the prevalence of chronic childhood malnutrition decreased from 29.5 per cent to 22.9 per cent between 2005 and 2016, 155 million children under the age of five years are still affected by that malady — a clear reflection that we are far from eradicating hunger and malnutrition.

We welcome the reference in the draft resolution to the importance of promoting sustainable farming and agriculture in order to eradicate hunger and malnutrition and to the contribution that family farming and smallholder farming can make to that end.

The draft resolution recognizes that women are often more affected by food insecurity than men in every region of the world, that almost one third of women of reproductive age worldwide suffer from anaemia and that wasting, undernutrition, overweight and obesity are recurrent problems that affect children in several countries are of the greatest importance and require the commitment of all to deal with them.

The document reiterates the call on Governments, United Nations agencies, other international and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector and academic institutions to make ambitious commitments with a view to strengthening efforts and scaling up activities under the work programme of the Decade, as well as our appeal to FAO and WHO to redouble efforts in continuing to lead the activities of the work programme, in collaboration with WFP, IFAD and UNICEF and in consultation with other organizations and platforms, together with the reference to convening open and inclusive dialogues at the midterm evaluation of the Decade and at the end of it in order to build on the initiatives of Governments and their partners.

Finally, as facilitator of the informal consultations, Ecuador expresses its gratitude to the delegations that actively participated in the discussion on the text before us, as well as for the technical support during consultations by the representatives of the offices of FAO and WHO. We reiterate our appreciation to the Permanent Missions of Guinea, Samoa, Senegal and Tunisia for the early sponsorship of the draft resolution, and we thank the 19 States that by 9 o'clock today had decided to sponsor it. We invite other delegations to sponsor the document, which is the result of a multilateral exercise in mutual benefit.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/72/L.63, entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Pollard (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/72/L.63: Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Germany, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Myanmar, Palau, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovenia, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/72/L.63?

Draft resolution A/72/L.63 was adopted (resolution 72/306).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Bagwell (United States of America): While we joined the consensus on resolution 72/306, entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)", we would like to make reference to our prior statements containing points of clarification on language related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We once again underscore that the 2030 Agenda is non-binding, does not create or affect rights or obligations under international law and does it create any new financial commitments.

We previously provided an explanation of the United States position on this matter in the General Assembly on 12 June following the adoption of resolution 72/281, under agenda item 14 (see A/72/PV.95).

Mr. Cadena Duarte (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly's adoption of resolution 72/306,

entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)", sends a clear message of optimism.

The Government of Ecuador promotes healthy food practices and assistance for the development of the agricultural sector as mechanisms to ensure a decent life for the population. Reducing the prevalence of chronic malnutrition and investing in new technologies for agricultural production are priority areas for action. Early childhood care, with an emphasis on the first 1,000 days of life, is one of our main challenges. Our public policies focus on reducing chronic malnutrition in children between the ages of 2 and 5, while encouraging only breastfeeding during the first six months of life. At the same time, we face pressing problems of obesity and overweight in children aged five to 11, the prevalence of which was more than 31 per cent in 2014.

We have made significant progress in Ecuador in measuring average household food consumption, which is essential for analysis and action. Our goal is to ensure that more and more households have the means to access foodstuffs such as grains, meat and dairy products, which are necessary to guarantee an adequate caloric intake. The main cause of hunger in the world is poverty.

Ecuador presented its intersectoral food and nutrition plan last February. The plan, which covers the period 2018-2025, aims at ensuring adequate nutrition throughout a person's life and comprehensive care, as well as the setting up of mechanisms for shared responsibility among all levels of Government, citizens and the private sector. The latter would involve intersectoral interventions that act on the social determinants of health, with the aim of addressing all forms of malnutrition through a participatory, consensual and joint effort.

We reiterate our commitment to participating actively in multilateral processes to get back on the right track towards achieving our common goals.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 14?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.